

ROLLER COASTER 2000

FORCES RE-SHAPING DAILY LIFE AND WORK IN AMERICA: 1990-2010

compiled by

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A. ECONOMIC DE-STRUCTURING (1970 to the mid-1990's)

1. LONG-TERM (PAST 25 YEARS) – Economic growth and productivity improvement rates have stagnated and per capita wages have declined; the income gap between the rich and poor in America has grown, increasing the political polarization among ethnic-groups and economic classes.

2. LONG-TERM (PAST 25 YEARS) – To supplement the declining income provided by their families' primary wage-earners, millions of U.S. wives and mothers enter the workforce; the numbers of 2-income families rise from 1/3 to 3/4 of all households. While this adaptation effectively sustains levels of family income for a quarter-century, the resulting rise in "absentee parenting" produces increased numbers of unattended minor children in America, with concomitant rises in drug abuse and teen pregnancy, and declines in K-12 school performance.

3. MID-TERM (PAST 15 YEARS) – Nearly 50 million U.S. workers are terminated in mid-career or forced to retire early between 1981 and 1996.

4. MID-TERM (PAST 10 YEARS) – A \$1 trillion investment by U.S. employers in information technology fails to restore either our productivity improvement rates OR prosperity.

B. INSTITUTIONAL RE-STRUCTURING (The Present)

5. (PAST 10 YEARS - NEXT 10 YEARS) – We have just passed through the inflection-point of a 70 to 80 year period of techno-economic transition -- shifting from labor-intensive to information-intensive production and management. During the first two-thirds of our assimilation of information technology, there has been a temporary decline in our economic performance, social prosperity and public revenue; history shows that such periods of diminished prosperity are characteristic of techno-economic revolutions.

6. (PAST 10 YEARS - NEXT 10 YEARS) – All large private and public sector institutions adopt new social technology, transforming themselves through de-layering, outsourcing and employee upskilling from pyramidal, hierarchical, vertically-integrated authoritarian bureaucracies to flat, collaborative networks of authoritative competency, in which essentially all operational decision-making will be transferred from managers to “info-mated” rank and file workers.

C. THE SOCIAL COSTS OF TECHNICAL PROGRESS (The Present)

7. (PAST 10 YEARS - NEXT 10 YEARS) – Massive mid-career terminations sustain a large, ongoing core of displaced, under-employed blue and white collar workers; in particular, direct labor will be squeezed out of information work -- banking, insurance, real estate, accounting, etc. -- in the same manner that we have already squeezed most of the labor out of agriculture and manufacturing.

8. (PAST 10 YEARS - NEXT 10 YEARS) – Numbers of multi-generation households grow rapidly; families -- society’s “natural” social safety net -- deal with most of the individual consequences of mass layoffs and insufficient health funding, as well as

caring for most aging dependents, for the children of working parents, and for the orphaned or abandoned children of their kin.

D. THE TRANS-MILLENNIUM (The “Near-Term” Future --1995-2005)

9. (1995 -->) – The “constructive” stage of the Information Revolution has finally gotten underway, as increasingly powerful, cheap, easy-to-use info-mated products and services are pouring into the workplace and consumer markets, enriching (and complicating) our daily lives, and, most importantly, improving our productivity.

10. (1995 -->) – The information content of manufactured products -- in the form of design, engineering, software, “smart” materials, imbedded sensors, and microprocessors, etc. -- will grow rapidly, dramatically increasing the utility, serviceability and durability of most consumer goods and business equipment.

11. (1995 -->) – The hallmark of info-mated operations will be their capacity to produce goods and services that precisely meet marketplace requirements for price and performance. Ultimately, this will mean the ability to produce custom-tailored suits at off-the-rack prices; individually-designed homes for the cost of a tract house, plus dramatic improvements in the quality of services, especially medical treatment, education, and personal financial management.

12. (1995 - 2005) – Large-scale lay-offs from de-layering and out-sourcing will come to an end (2000), and successfully info-mated organizations will begin to mass-produce a new generation of high value-adding, info-mated jobs (2000 to 2005); the organizational restructuring of large vertically-integrated, institutions to flat, virtually-integrated networks will be largely completed (2005).

13. (1995 - 2005) – While general levels of economic well-being will improve steadily during the second half of the 1990’s and into the 21st Century, the long-term socio-economic pain caused by our techno-economic restructuring was at its greatest during and after the 1990-91 Recession, and will remain high through the end of the decade. The residual effects of these massive displacements can still be expected to generate urban social unrest, extremist politics, hate groups and hate crimes, and

home-grown American terrorism, although at a declining rate as general prosperity improves.

14. Between 1995 and 2005, **all** industrial economies will be passing through this same techno-economic shift from labor-intensive to information-intensive production and management with similar socio-economic consequences and socio-political turbulence. However, much of the necessary deregulation and corporate/government downsizing that has already been completed in the U.S. has yet to be accomplished in Europe and industrial Asia, and those nations will experience considerable economic distress and socio-political unrest in the next 5 years. The transformation of the other mature industrial economies will make these nations problematic markets and ferocious competitors for North American producers.

E. AMERICA TRANSFORMED -- BY 2010.....

15. Up to 70% of jobs will be earning middle/upper level incomes (up from 45% in 1995, and 65% in 1970.)

16. The average business will have roughly half as many employees as it had in 1980, but there will be twice as many employers.

17. Nearly 20% of all workers will be self-employed, (up from 10% in 1990), most of whom will work out of their homes, as will 20% of all salaried white collar workers; the return of commercial production to the domestic sector will greatly strengthen the family as an institution.

18. To facilitate flexible, efficient production operations – and to accommodate employees' non-work obligations – roughly 1/4 of all U.S. jobs will be part-time, temporary or intermittent positions, *most of which will offer pay and benefits commensurate to equivalent full-time employees.*

19. There will be a large and growing number of "inter-modal" enterprises: i.e. private firms and not-for-profits using combined public, private and contributed resources to perform specific public/community services.

20. As the labor requirements of most production operations have shrunk, employers have continued to migrate out of big cities and suburbs into small towns and rural areas in search of lower operating costs and higher quality environment.

21. While industrial work has steadily migrated out of center cities, most U.S. urban centers have staged remarkable economic comebacks following their 30-year economic decline (1960 - 1990). Downtowns across America are becoming vibrant, culturally-diverse residential communities with hundreds of thousands of middle-class households occupying millions of square feet of converted office buildings made redundant by the Information Revolution.

22. Through the World Wide WebNet of national and international electronic "I-Ways," America's homes, schools, businesses and public agencies will be linked to thousands of information utilities, and decision-critical information will flow into our daily lives the way electricity or water do now. The resulting ease of communications between individuals and institutions will not only revolutionize the relationship between employers and employees, but the relationships between producers and consumers, affinity groups and their members, and voters and politicians as well.

23. Information products and services – including hardware and software, communications, info-mation education, publishing research, design and development, etc. will have become America's principal commercial output and dominant export, generating over 50% of our GNP.

24. The most important new feature of information technology will be "conversational computing." By 2010, most routine uses of computers for assistance in problem solving, planning and decision-making will be in the form of verbal exchanges with microprocessors equipped with a colloquial command of the language. On the job and in our homes, we will all be "chatting" with our computers by 2010.

25. With renewed prosperity, America will – as it has in the past – assimilate the most recent surge of immigration; most large coastal cities will have over 50% minority populations who will have substantially revitalized those urban economies.

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